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Decorative Arts has to deal, and it is to be hoped that the use made of these new arrangements will justify their further expansion.

D. F.

EXHIBITION OF FLEMISH DECORATIVE ART

BELGIUM is now of predominant interest to so many residents of New York that some recognition of this city's richness in examples of the older arts of Flanders seems appropriate, almost inevitable, at a time when much similar and irreplaceable material is being daily destroyed. The Museum has therefore arranged a temporary exhibition of Flemish decorative art in the Special Exhibition Room, Gallery 11 of Wing E, where objects of Flemish origin are gathered together either from the galleries of the Museum itself or from private collections, some of which have not previously been drawn upon for purposes of public display.

The exhibition is confined to the decorative arts, as practical considerations did not admit of the inclusion of paintings, which would necessarily be so important as to demand a larger space than could be assigned to the present display. Although no exhibition which disregards painting can be truly representative of Flemish art, the region which is now called Belgium was for centuries so remarkably fertile a source of the lesser arts, that a gathering of typical specimens of Flemish craftsmanship may be of interest in itself as showing the wide versatility of the native workers. From Gothic times onward, Flemish products, varying in kind but not in excellence, were famous throughout Europe and reached the most outlying regions, while Flemish artists and artisans penetrated into almost every Occidental country, either as students or as workmen more skilled than the native laborers.

The influence of Italy on the art of Flanders is well known, but the converse is less often emphasized and it may not be amiss to recall here that the method of painting in oil, perfected by the brothers

Van Eyck and traditionally said to have been carried as a novelty to Italy by Antonello da Messina, changed the entire complexion of Italian art. Furthermore, Gian Bologna, one of the outstanding figures in Italian sculpture, was born a Fleming; while for two hundred years after the middle of the fifteenth century, Flemish tapestries were considered by Italians as far superior to the native weavings, which made little attempt to rival the imported product, so highly prized by the great princes and art patrons of the Renaissance.

At the French court from the time of Francis I many of the best carvers and cabinet-makers were brought from Flanders, and England at the same period began to be overrun by Flemish woodworkers, embroiderers, and weavers who continued to influence—and produce—English decorative art until the eighteenth century. Many of the Gothic chests, revered in England as the best native work, are importations from Flanders, while much Elizabethan paneling and later Jacobean furniture were the product of the chisels of Flemish cabinet-makers resident in England.

The aim of the present exhibition, however, is not to show the productions of Anglo- or Franco-Flemish art, but only objects made in Flanders itself, and much material which might have been included has had to be rejected because it was of Dutch or Burgundian origin and although very similar to Flemish work could not strictly be credited to the Belgium of today. One of the early tapestries, however, was probably woven at Arras, not now a Belgian city, although formerly one of the great centers of Flemish weaving.

Among the earliest examples of Flemish art here shown are the splendid illuminated manuscripts lent by Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan. These, as their colophons state, are from Bruges, Ghent, and other cities now in the path of war, while Antwerp is represented by six volumes, also lent by Mr. Morgan, from the Plantin-Moretus press, happily familiar to visitors as housed in one of the most interesting seventeenth-century buildings in existence. The Grolier Club

also has lent a fine Gothic manuscript of the Hours of the Virgin and three Plantin books, which are shown together with Mr. Morgan's volumes just referred to.

Typical of Flanders' best-known product are the tapestries on the walls, including Mr. George Blumenthal's decorative hunting piece woven toward the end of the fifteenth century, and the same owner's slightly later Crucifixion, made after a cartoon by Bernard van Orley, famous as a painter and a designer of tapestries. Because of their size, two other fine tapestries belonging to Mr. Blumenthal, and not previously shown in the Museum, are hung in the main entrance hall. One of these is a late Gothic example woven with gold and silver thread in Brussels in 1508, while the other is an earlier Burgundian production of great interest. Both tapestries were lent for the Flemish exhibition. A set of five Renaissance pieces, lent by Mr. Joseph Sampson Stevens, are beautiful intrinsically and interesting as showing Italian designs—by a pupil close to Raphael—carried out on Flemish looms. Mr. Marsden J. Perry has allowed his remarkable tapestry, one of the finest hangings owned in America, to be shown.

A number of cases of the splendid lace which in later times has been regarded by most people as a product pre-eminently Belgian, represent that important phase of Flemish art. Although Brussels is the lace center most familiar to the collector, Antwerp, Malines, and other localities all had their individual patterns and weaves, examples of which have been here assembled.

Some of the specimens of furniture and sculpture in the exhibition have been displayed previously in other galleries of the Museum, but among the number now shown for the first time are chests, cabinets, chairs, and other carved pieces which give evidence that the Flemish skill in wood-working was always combined with a just sense of proportion and a fine knowledge of pattern. Two chests of drawers, lent by the Misses Hewitt, are of interest as typical of French eighteenth century fashion as expressed by Flemish workmen.

From the Crosby Brown Collection are four spinets by the best-known Flemish makers, which show the fine workmanship characteristic of musical instruments produced in the Low Countries during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

D. F.

GREEK PREHISTORIC ART

OUR collection of Greek prehistoric art has made marked progress during the year 1914. Besides a number of reproductions, we have been fortunate enough to obtain sixteen original pieces, acquired from the University Museum, Philadelphia, in exchange for duplicate Cypriote vases. Though our collection of Minoan art must always necessarily be dependent on reproductions for the representation of its masterpieces, it is a source of satisfaction that we have been able to supplement these copies with original material, which, though humbler in appearance, will prove invaluable for our just appreciation of this great art. The pieces now acquired are derived from various American excavations in eastern Crete, carried on by Mrs. C. H. Hawes, Miss Edith R. Hall, and Mr. Richard B. Seager. They consist of twelve terracotta vases and four objects in stone, ranging from the Early Minoan period to the Early Iron Age. Several pieces have been extensively restored.

In the Early Minoan period can be dated three cups of different techniques, illustrating the variety of fabrics in use at that epoch. One, with a fine mottled decoration in red and black, was found at Priniatiko Pirgo; similar examples from Gournia and Vasiliki are already in our collection. A cup with trough spout and a design of parallel oblique lines in creamy white on a reddish and black ground (fig. 1) is from Vasiliki; a cup with loop handle and a decoration of festoons and dots in white on black (fig. 2) was found at Pseira. Of these the first belongs to the Early Minoan II period (about 2800–2500 B.C.), and the other two to the end of the Early Minoan III period (about 2500–2200 B.C.).